

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 L-03 PA-01 ACDA-12
TRSE-00 /079 W
-----014024 241015Z/20 L

R 240900Z FEB 78
FM USMISSION USBERLIN
TO AMEMBASSY BONN
SECSTATE WASHDC 6311
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 0436

E.O.11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV, GE, GW, UR, WB
SUBJECT: BOELKE ON BRUNTE/ABRASIMOV DECEMBER 8 CONVERSATION;
FRG ACTIONS ON BERLIN

REF: (A) BONN 3067, (B) USBERLIN 361, (C) 77 USBERLIN 3126

BEGIN SUMMARY. IN THOUGHTFUL PIECE I FEB. 19 TAGESSPIEGEL,
VETERAN BERLIN-WATCHER JOACHIM BOELKE PUT TOGETHER CONTROVERSY
ABOUT ABRASIMOV/BRUNET CONVERSATION ON DEC. 8 TO CONCLUDE
THAT ABRASIMOV HAD INDEED SAID THE SOVIET UNION MIGHT LOOK FOR
ANOTHER INTERLOCUTOR ON BERLIN ISSUE, BUT THAT ABRASIMOV HAD
NOT HAD THE GDR IN MIND (AS MOST PEOPLE CONCLUDED), OR THE
SENAT (THE FRENCH GUESS), BUT THE FRG. AT LEAST ONE LOCAL
SOVIET JOURNALIST HAS MADE THIS POINT IN CONTRADICTION TO
SOVIET DENIALS THAT ABRASIMOV EVER UTTERED THE CONTROVERSIAL
SENTENCE. BOELKE REASONED THAT THE SOVIET UNION MAY FEEL IT
CAN PUT PRESSURE MORE EASILY ON THE FRG THAN THE THREE ALLIES.
HE ALSO ARGUED THAT THE FRG WOULD DO WELL ON BERLIN MATTERS

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TO AVOID THE TEMPTATION OF ASCRIBING TO ALLIED RESERVATIONS
ITS OWN POLITICAL RELUCTANCE TO UNDERTAKE THIS OR THAT
ACTION IN BERLIN. END SUMMARY.

1. FEBRUARY 19 TAGESSPIEGEL CARRIED FRONT-PAGE BOELKE
EDITORIAL ABOUT LAST WEEK'S LEAK OF BRUNET/ABRASIMOV CON-
VERSATION AS WELL AS PRESS REPORTING ABOUT DISCUSSION OF

EXFILTRATION ISSUE IN BONN GROUP. BOELKE CORRECTLY POINTED OUT THAT THE REPORT THAT ABRASIMOV RAISED EXFILTRATION WITH BRUNET WAS FALSE. (NOTE: WE KNOW THAT A SOVIET JOURNALIST WAS SOURCE OF THE FALSE REPORT.) HE THEN ADDED THAT THE IMPRESSION NEVERTHELESS EXISTS THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE PRESSURED THE ALLIES ON EXFILTRATION, AND THAT THE ALLIES VIA THE BONN GROUP HAVE PASSED ON THIS PRESSURE TO THE FRG. BOELKE NOTED HOW CONVENIENT IT IS FOR THE FRG IN AVOIDING INTERNAL POLITICAL DISPUTES ABOUT EXFILTRATION TO BE ABLE TO CITE ALLIED PRESSURE AS A REASON FOR TAKING ACTION. HOWEVER, BOELKE ADDED, THE TRUTH IS THAT IT IS UP TO THE FRG TO RECONCILE ITS TRANSIT AGREEMENT OBLIGATIONS WITH THE FRG LEGAL SITUATION AND THE ALLIES SHOULD NOT BE BROUGHT INTO SUCH PROBLEMS TOO EARLY.

2. BOELKE THEN POINTED OUT THAT IF THE REPORT THAT ABRASIMOV RAISED EXFILTRATION WITH BRUNET WAS FALSE, THE OTHER REPORT THAT ABRASIMOV HAD THREATENED TO SEEK ANOTHER PARTNER ON BERLIN MATTERS WAS CORRECT. BOELKE OBSERVED THAT EVERYONE SEEMED TO HAVE JUMPED TO A FALSE CONCLUSION ABOUT THIS ABRASIMOV UTTERANCE, NAMELY THAT THE GDR WOULD BE THE NEW PARTNER. ABRASIMOV HAD IN MIND THE FRG RATHER THAN THE GDR (IN THE CONNECTION FALIN'S AUTHORIZATION TO DISCUSS BERLIN MATTERS IN BONN REPORTED IN PARA 2 OF REF A IS INTERESTING). BOELKE RATIONALIZED THAT THE SOVIET MESSAGE TO THE FRG REALLY IS THAT THE FRG WILL FIND ALLIED PROTECTION

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INSUFFICIENT TO PROTECT THE FRG FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF FRG VIOLATIONS OF THE QA. IN A VARIATION ON THIS THEME, BOELKE RAISED ANOTHER POSSIBILITY - IF THE SOVIET UNION DEALS DIRECTLY WITH THE FRG ON BERLIN MATTERS, THE ALLIES WILL SEE THEIR OWN POSITION IN BERLIN THREATENED AND WILL THEREFORE FINALLY BEGIN TO PRESSURE THE FRG NOT TO COMMIT QA VIOLATIONS. BOELKE SUMMARIZED THAT IN ALL LEGALLY PERMISSIBLE DEVELOPMENT OF TIES, THE FRG WILL RECEIVE ALLIED SUPPORT WHEN NECESSARY ACTIONS ARE INVOLVED. BUT WHEN A QUESTION OF POLITICAL OPPORTUNENESS RATHER THAN NECESSITY IS INVOLVED, WHICH CAN BE DECIDED ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, THEN THE FRG SHOULD BE FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS DECISION AND NOT RPT NOT TRY TO BRING THE ALLIES INTO THE GAME. AS SOON AS THE FRG CLAIMS THAT IT DOES NOT WISH TO UNDERTAKE AN ACTION BECAUSE OF ALLIED RESERVATIONS, THE FRG HAS CONVERTED A MINOR QUESTION OF OPPORTUNENESS INTO A BASIC QUESTION INVOLVING THE LEGAL INTERPRETATION BY THE ALLIES OF THE QA. IN SUMMARY, WHEN THE FRG DECIDES TO DEVELOP ITS TIES TO BERLIN, IT SHOULD BE SURE OF BOTH THE LEGAL SITUATION

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AND THE NECESSITY FOR THE ACTION; IN SUCH CASES, IT CAN BE SURE OF ALLIED SUPPORT. BUT WHEN THE NECESSITY IS NOT CLEAR AND ESSENTIALLY A MATTER OF POLITICAL OPPORTUNENESS INVOLVED, THEN THE DECISION MUST BE THAT OF THE FRG. IN SUCH CASES, THE FRG WILL HAVE CONSULTED WITH THE ALLIES, BUT THE END RESULT MUST APPEAR AS AN FRG AND NOT AN ALLIED DECISION.

3. COMMENTS: WE KNOW THAT AT LEAST ONE SOVIET JOURNALIST IN EAST BERLIN HAS POINTED OUT TO A WESTERN JOURNALIST THAT ABRASIMOV'S STATEMENT ABOUT A NEW INTERLOCUTOR ON BERLIN QUESTIONS WAS MISUNDERSTOOD. THIS ADMISSION THAT ABRASIMOV MADE THE STATEMENT IN QUESTION IS OF COURSE IN CONFLICT WITH OTHER SOVIET ASSERTIONS THAT HE SAID NO RPT NO SUCH THING - AND EVEN THAT THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN BONN ISSUED A DENIAL (SIC*). WE SUSPECT THE REAL EMBARRASSMENT IS ON THE SOVIET SIDE FOR MAKING A UNAUTHORIZED STATEMENT, AND

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FOR THE COMPLICATIONS IT SPUBLICATION MIGHT CAUSE WITH THE GDR AND MAYBE MOSCOW. EVEN IF THIS IS TRUE, HOWEVER, THE

MYSTERY REMAINS WHETHER THE CONTROVERSIAL STATEMENT RAN AGAINST MOSCOW POLICY, OR WHETHER ABRASIMOV REVEALED PRE-MATURELY A NEW POLICY THRUST.

4. AS FOR BOELKE'S THESIS ON TIES, WE AND THE FRENCH AND BRITISH HERE COULD NOT BE HAPPIER WITH THE WAY THE BOELKE PRESENTED THE ISSUE. IN PRACTICAL POLITICAL TERMS, HOWEVER, WE ARE NOT CONFIDENT THAT THE POLITICAL OPPORTUNENESS "STAND UP AND BE COUNTED" INJUNCTION TO THE FRG WILL HAVE MUCH EFFECT. IN BONN AS ELSEWHERE THOSE WHO MUST MAKE POLITICALLY-CONTROVERSIAL DECISIONS ARE NOT AVERSE TO LAYING AS MUCH RESPONSIBILITY AS POSSIBLE ON OTHERS' SHOULDERS. GEORGE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, AGREEMENTS, POLITICAL SITUATION, BERLIN QUADRUPLETTIE MATTERS, NEWS LEAKS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978USBERL00436
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780085-1146
Format: TEL
From: USBERLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780213/aaaaalae.tel
Line Count: 183
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 0aa8b5cf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BONN 3067, 78 USBERLIN 361, 77 USBERLIN 3126
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3478251
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BOELKE ON BRUNTE/ABRASIMOV DECEMBER 8 CONVERSATION; FRG ACTIONS ON BERLIN
TAGS: PGOV, SOPN, GC, GE, UR, WB
To: BONN STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0aa8b5cf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014